

Testimony for Public Hearing  
February 23, 2019  
Karle Lewer MSN RN  
Corvallis OR 97330

My name is Karle Lewer. I am a clinical instructor for OHSU School of Nursing at the Monmouth campus. I have also worked as an instructor for the nursing program at Oregon Coast Community College in Newport, Oregon. I am writing to urge you to create the tax credit for rural nurse faculty members.

Many citizens are aware of the threat of a nursing shortage; especially as the population ages, and current nurses retire. The loss of nurses to retirement, and the influx of patients due to an aging population are certainly concerning, however these are not the only challenges. In order to address a nurse shortage, new nurses must enter the profession. For that to happen, they must be trained and educated. Unfortunately, as nurses retire, so does nursing faculty. Recruitment to replace faculty is difficult. In order to be considered for a faculty position, a nurse must either have completed, or be in the process of obtaining a Masters or PhD. This requires tens of thousands of dollars in additional education, only to see a significant cut in pay with the transition to academia. I have seen nurses apply for faculty positions, only to refuse the job when the financial aspects are revealed. In fact, I initially declined a faculty position for this reason.

Even if recruitment is successful, retention is a problem for the same reason. I personally know multiple faculty members who have left faculty positions and returned to the acute care setting because the difference in pay. I have also worked with a number of peers who have had to maintain part time floor nursing positions in addition to faculty roles; not for the clinical experience, but because of financial need.

A tax credit for nurse faculty members will help to address the financial issues that contribute to the nurse faculty shortage. At this point in time, to be a nurse faculty is not a financially viable career choice due to debt incurred to obtain necessary qualifications. Although this bill will not entirely solve the problem, I believe that this step to address the financial aspect will help with both recruitment and retention of well educated, caring, and dedicated faculty.